

**Culture, Museum, and Entertainment  
Working Group Meeting Summary  
October 3, 2006**

**Overview**

Rich Bradley, Executive Director of the Downtown BID, gave an overview of the Center City Action Agenda. The DC Office of Planning and the Downtown BID have partnered to create a process as a follow-up to the successful 2000 Downtown Action Agenda. The downtown area is becoming built-out, with only about 5 million square feet of development potential out of a projected 25-30 million square feet over the next five years. One visible trend is development is shifting to areas adjacent to the traditional downtown area, which is to be expected as the core area is built out. Therefore, there is a need to look at a broader area – the Center City. This broader area encompasses the higher-density zoning and mixed-use development types that are found in the downtown area – stretching from Dupont Circle to the SE-SW Waterfront and from Foggy Bottom to Capital Hill.

The Action Agenda will establish a new set of 5-year goals with a list of strategic actions that can be initiated over the next 18 months in order to achieve those goals. Another significant change from the 2000 Action Agenda will be the consideration of qualitative factors, such as sense of place and other quality of life indicators that are more than square feet or dollar value. The planning process will be relatively quick, with a final report issued in February 2007. A steering committee provides oversight and will sort out priorities between the eight different working groups. The working group process will be an intensive two-meeting process. This first meeting will be for issue identification. The second meeting will be to identify 8-10 strategic actions, with 2-3 high priority actions, to achieve the 5-year goals. The actions can be broadly defined to include future planning studies as well as “bricks and mortar” improvement projects.

**Issue Discussion**

**Access**

- Need to increase access to culture, museum and entertainment (CM & E) for those who work, live and visit the Center City.
- Most people who visit the District go to the Mall/Smithsonian. Even though the distinction between the Mall and downtown is getting less, we should attract more visitors into downtown. Need to market city to Mall visitors.
- We need to be proactive about marketing, particularly to residents. There is a lot of leakage.

- Consider installing cultural kiosks throughout the city, including at Union Station that provide easy-to-access and up-to-date information about events in the Center City as well as transportation information; use the Convention Center for exhibiting so that the best culture from each ward has a place downtown; use more technology and WI-FI networks to promote events to a wider audience.

#### Integration of art into development

- Need to make CM & E an integrated and integral part of the Center City experience. It should not be 'separated out,' but instead be a frequent occurrence in a variety of spheres. Restaurants and offices could increase the amount of art they showcase on their walls and in their buildings.
- The percent for art regulation has not been implemented; in the early 80s, all buildings built for DC were supposed to have a percent for art. Need to extend this to all developers in the city. Could have mandated this inclusion for the stadium site.
- A problem is that every developer needs to reinvent the wheel in terms of figuring out the District's cultural assets.

#### Emerging Areas

- There are mixed use growth opportunities now that may not be available 10 years from now. The southeast could be a cultural destination.
- How CM & E can lead development and improvement of an emerging area? People who may be hesitant to go to an emerging area can be motivated to do so for a CM & E event or experience.
- The argument should be made to the new administration that culture can drive a city and positively contribute to the overall health of a city.

#### Linkages

- CM & E can provide linkages from more established areas of DC to emerging areas of the Center City and these linkages need to be strengthened. People who work, live and visit Georgetown, Capital Hill, Adams Morgan, 14<sup>th</sup> and U St., etc. should be able to easily access the emerging CM & E areas.
- Public transportation, new Circulator bus routes and pedestrian corridors are important linkages to consider when planning for Center City CM & E.
- CM & E should be connected to other desirable retail experiences that can complement each other, such as restaurant dining, shopping, etc.

#### Artist space and underutilized areas

- There is a lack of space for artists to work, practice, exhibit and perform. There are several large and medium sized venues. However, there are not many small-scale locations for emerging artists.
- Art in downtown seems to be threatened; as buildings deteriorate in the 7<sup>th</sup> St corridor, they will be retrofitted and arts tenants may leave.
- There is a need to match up under-utilized space with those artists and community organizations that are looking for space. Public underutilized

space, in particular, should be targeted, such as Department of Recreation buildings, the neighborhood libraries, and boarded up buildings.

- Parks in the city are poorly programmed and underutilized. There are opportunities to use these facilities for cultural activities.
- The city does not use buildings for art. The library has several vacant/underutilized sites with potential for exhibits.

#### Affordable housing/lodging

- There is a pressing need for affordable artist housing for all kinds of artists (musicians, artists, writers etc.) There is no faster way to revitalize a neighborhood than through establishing an artist community.
- The lack of affordable housing means that many artists cannot live in the Center City, and are unable to fully create and contribute to a vibrant CM & E environment.
- The city should provide seed money for land. Artists can pay a mortgage.
- Cultural institutions also need access to reasonably priced housing, since they rent apartments to visiting artists etc.
- There is also a need for more variation in hotel rates so that more diverse cultural consumers will stay near the venues, which could increase the number of people attending these CM & E venues.

#### Market

- There is over saturation of the market. The theatre market is fully developed once the Shakespeare Theatre completes its expansion.
- There is also strong regional competition in the concert market, and venues have experienced attendance pressure from the opening of new venues. Existing facilities have needed to change programming, shift and/or expand the type of event held in the auditorium in order to continue operations.
- On the other hand, there are examples of CM & E attractions in the Center City that could grow, but are constrained by space limitations.
- How do we expand the market and not compete with other venues in the District? How do we create opportunities for smaller organizations? We need to better understand the market place and the economy.
- One trend could be growth in those museums that charge for admission. Another trend could be that growth occurs with smaller organizations, which will locate where the supply of space is available. Can get space in the SE waterfront area for \$50/sq ft compared to Downtown's \$300- 400/sq ft.
- A study should be conducted about CM & E market, including the actual need for new venues. Include an audience survey to better understand the current demographics of CM & E attendees; how planning for new venues could meet their unmet needs; who is not currently attending CM & E events. Focus on ways to provide new venues/events that will appeal to them.
- It is a concern that the hotel industry projects only 2% growth. Where do the 20 million folks visiting the mall stay?

#### Creative Class

- CM & E can play a role in attracting and retaining a 'Creative Class,' a group highly desirable for the development of emerging areas. Issues raised included
- How does the District capture the momentum and experiences of the creative surge taking place?

**Other issues**

- Make sales of art tax free. This will help increase art sales.
- The city's deed and recordation tax goes to housing. Can the economic case be made for the city to be an investor in art? The argument could be made that the arts play a significant role in attracting economic development and a creative workforce, such as in London and New York.
- High cost of advertising. Many CM & E venues need help expanding and improving the scope of their advertisement to local, regional, and international audiences.

**Discussion of Possible Strategies & Actions**

**Funding**

- Need to increase funding to major institutions as well as small/growing institutions.
- Review percent for art and other regulations/incentives for arts.

**Market Research**

- Conduct a market analysis of CM & E that examines demand, regional competition, consumer preference, need for new venues etc. Also review economic contributions of CM & E.
- Need to look at the continuum of CM & E providers, including new and emerging institutions.
- Need to better understand the creative/arts economy.

**Marketing & PR**

- Pursue opportunities for cross marketing. Package CM & E in different parts of the city, such as 14th Street and Chinatown and market to residents and the region.
- Increase the number of tourists who visit CM & E venues by strengthening the relationship with the Mall. Consider a federal cultural development office/liaison with the city who can help market and coordinate events, particularly with Mall institutions such as the Smithsonian.

**Connecting artists to developers**

- Could provide developers with clear information about how to access the cultural assets of the Center City, such as who are local artists that can provide art for buildings, funding options to support installing public art, opportunities for including an artist on the design team, etc.

**Artist space**

- Conduct a study about the under-utilized space in the Center City and ways that the space could become temporary or permanent places for diverse CM & E.
- Establish a process that makes finding, accessing and using a space easier to navigate. This could take the form of a single website/clearinghouse with all of the information about spaces and/or a 'how-to guide' for first time users.
- Use underutilized public spaces, such as libraries, for exhibits etc. Hold outdoor sculpture exhibits in spaces around museums, and display public art in parks and in emerging areas.
- Review/develop strategies on provision of affordable housing and production space for artists.
- CM & E should be a main focus of Center City sub-area planning, particularly in emerging areas.